

# Southern TRAVEL+Culture

YOUR LOCAL'S GUIDE TO ALL POINTS SOUTH



## Holidays in the Holy City

*In Charleston, South Carolina, Christmas is celebrated with pecan roasts aplenty, bourbon-spiked eggnog, and loads of antebellum charm. It's time to deck the halls, Lowcountry-style*



ROBBIE CAPONETTO

by SANDY LANG

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Holiday lights create a festive Marion Square.



LEFT: Ann Caldwell & The Magnolia Singers at Drayton Hall



### SEERSUCKER HAS

**LONG** turned to tweed, snow-white and candy cane-striped camellias are in bloom, and oyster-roast season is in full swing.

All around the historic peninsula, friends gather on piazzas strung with garland

while gas lamps flicker into the winter nights. As the year comes to a close with plenty of frothy eggnog (and just a bit of bourbon), Charleston rolls out its finest for locals and visitors alike.

No Southern locale hosts the holidays quite like the Holy City. A seasonal sampling of only-in-Charleston experiences begins here, from stately mansions trimmed in Victorian frill to carriage rides between cocktails in world-class watering holes. When it comes to a one-of-a-kind way to toast the year, this belle of Southern cities does it her own way.

### Eat

The **Charleston Holiday Progressive Dinner** is the most quintessential of Christmas traditions. The nightly meals are a multiple-course affair, with diners transported to each site via old-fashioned carriage. Evenings begin at **Kings**

**Courtyard Inn** ([kingscourtyardinn.com](http://kingscourtyardinn.com)), where guests sip hot, spiced cinnamon-apple cider and pomegranate eggnog. Then on to **Circa 1886** ([circa1886.com](http://circa1886.com)), a graceful and beloved restaurant inside the Wentworth Mansion, for a grand holiday meal of sweet potato soup, arugula salad, and roasted beef

tenderloin or grilled Loch Duart salmon.

Wind down, and warm up, with a trio of Southern desserts and coffee in the ballroom at the **John Rutledge House Inn** on Broad Street; it's a grandiose place where a bygone era comes alive. Dinners start on November 28 and continue through December

23 (\$100/person). [johnrutledgehouseinn.com](http://johnrutledgehouseinn.com)

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the plush, velvet-walled dining room of **Peninsula Grill** is the perfect place to savor a meal by acclaimed chef Graham Dailey. Expect white tablecloths and a holiday-size helping of Christmas cheer. Chef Graham and his crew serve up a prix fixe menu of winter fare, but the real treat comes by way of the oh-so-delectable and utterly indulgent 12-layer coconut cake. \$60; [peninsulagrill.com](http://peninsulagrill.com)

### Stay

During the holidays, one local classic (and a *Southern Living* Hotel Collection property) really does it right. **Wentworth Mansion**, a 21-room boutique hotel originally built in the 1880s, dresses to the nines. The foyer is spruced up in wreaths and trees, mantels are draped in greenery, and most rooms feature a roaring fireplace, just right for a cozy night in. Take advantage of the Winter Weekday

Special (for *Southern Living* readers only) with rates from \$329. Call to reserve (888/466-1886) and ask for special ASKDECSL. [wentworthmansion.com](http://wentworthmansion.com)

**Peninsula Grill's** decadent 12-layer coconut cake



ROBBIE CAPONETTO (3); BAND: CHRIS M. ROGERS





Find classic clothing and furnishings on King Street.

## Shop

Stock up on holiday gifts while strolling along King Street.

**Finicky Filly**, owned by mother-daughter duo Judy Casey and Rebecca Steinberg, features designers

including Lela Rose and Tory Burch, plus jewelry by artists such as Ela Rae and Julie Vos. [thefinickyfilly.com](http://thefinickyfilly.com)

**Ben Silver** is a one-stop shop for the well-dressed man. The store's silk

ties embellished with bedecked Christmas trees are conversation starters (\$145), and the boutique's silver-plated or 18-karat gold cuff links are an heirloom-worthy gift to tuck into a stocking (from \$185). [bensilver.com](http://bensilver.com)

With its giant gum-ball machine and mini Ferris wheel, **Magnifilous Toy Emporium** has quickly become a hit with Charleston children. We love the Lowcountry-designed and made toys, such as wooden puzzles and Munch Stix (jointed chopsticks for kids). [magnifilous.com](http://magnifilous.com)

## Do

**Charleston Strolls** offers a Holiday Walking Tour with in-the-know Charlestonians as guides, providing local knowledge of the city's most festive spots. Explore along the Battery, where wreaths welcome visitors in grand Southern style, through neighborhoods known for their decked-out decor, and to **The Mills House** hotel's Christmas tree that stands tall in front of a garland-draped staircase. \$19; [charlestonstrolls.com](http://charlestonstrolls.com)

Each year historic **Drayton Hall** hosts a

Spirituals Concert (\$45; [draytonhall.org](http://draytonhall.org)) with Ann Caldwell & The Magnolia Singers. The a capella trio has made a name

by singing to preserve the tradition of early Southern music and the South Carolina Gullah culture. 🎵

## CHRISTMAS ALL THROUGH THE SOUTH

CELEBRATE SOUTHERN LIVING-STYLE

The pages of our latest coffee-table book, *Christmas All Through the South* (out now), celebrate the beauty, flavor, and timeless traditions that many *Southern Living*

photographers have captured through the years—think decadent red velvet cake, grand historic estates, and charming front porches. \$26; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



The American Theater, a King Street landmark